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**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1           1. (Currently Amended) An occupant restraint mechanism disposed  
2       between a rigid member and an instrument panel of an automotive vehicle, said  
3       occupant restraint mechanism comprising:

4           first and second brackets each extending between proximal ends fixedly  
5       secured to the rigid member and distal ends coupled to the instrument panel, ~~one of~~  
6       said first and second brackets each having a pair of generally parallel side walls, at  
7       least one of said side walls having a notch formed therein extending through a portion  
8       thereof so as to define a predetermined wall depth and predetermined width, ~~said~~  
9       ~~notch having a predetermined size~~ to allow a predetermined amount of deformation of  
10      said first and second brackets during contact of an occupant with the instrument panel  
11      during a sudden deceleration of the vehicle.

1           2. (Cancelled)

1           3. (Currently Amended) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in  
2       claim 2 1, wherein each of said first and second brackets includes a web extending  
3       between said ~~outer and inner~~ side walls defining a generally U-shaped cross section.

1           4. (Currently Amended) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in  
2 claim 2 3, wherein each of said ~~outer and inner~~ side walls extends between an open  
3 edge and said web.

1           5. (Original) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 4,  
2 wherein said notch is formed along said open edge and extends in a concave manner  
3 toward said web.

1           6. (Original) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 5,  
2 wherein each of said first and second brackets extends arcuately between said  
3 proximal and distal ends.

1           7. (Original) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 6,  
2 wherein each of said first and second brackets includes a flange formed at each of said  
3 proximal ends thereof to allow said first and second brackets to be welded to the rigid  
4 member.

1           8. (Currently Amended) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in  
2 claim 7, wherein each of said first and second brackets includes an end wall defining  
3 each of said distal ends thereof and extending between said ~~outer and inner~~ side walls  
4 and said web, said end walls adapted to be fixedly secured to the instrument panel.

1           9. (Original) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 8,  
2 wherein each of said end walls includes an aperture formed therein to allow said distal  
3 ends of said first and second brackets to be fixedly secured to the instrument panel.

1           10. (Original) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 9,  
2 wherein one of said pair of brackets is positioned in the vicinity of the occupant's  
3 knees to minimize intrusion of the knees through the instrument panel.

1           11. (Currently Amended) An occupant restraint mechanism disposed  
2 between a rigid member and an instrument panel of an automotive vehicle, said  
3 occupant restraint mechanism comprising:

4           first and second brackets having spaced apart side walls, each of said first and  
5 second brackets including a web that extends between said side walls to define a  
6 generally U-shaped cross section, each of said side walls extending between an open  
7 edge and said web, each of said first and second brackets extending arcuately between  
8 opposite proximal and distal ends, said proximal end having a flange to allow said first  
9 and second brackets to be welded to the rigid member, said distal end having an end  
10 wall extending between said side walls, each end wall having an aperture formed  
11 therein to allow said distal ends of said first and second brackets to be fixedly secured  
12 to the instrument panel;

13           one of said first and second brackets having at least one notch formed therein,  
14 said notch having a predetermined size to allow a predetermined amount of

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15        deformation of said first and second brackets during contact of an occupant with the  
16        instrument panel during a sudden deceleration of the vehicle, said notch being formed  
17        in at least one of said side walls of said one of said first and second brackets, said  
18        notch being formed along said open edge and extending in a concave manner toward  
19        said web;

20            one of said pair of brackets being positioned in the vicinity of the occupant's  
21            knees to minimize intrusion of the knees through the instrument panel;

22            ~~An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 10, wherein~~ one of said  
23        pair of brackets is being disposed below the other such that the pair of brackets deform  
24        in a successive manner to minimize during contact between the occupant's knees and  
25        the instrument panel during sudden deceleration of the vehicle, thereby minimizing  
26        loading of the occupant's femurs.